

Conference Report

Sofia 2008: Globalization and the Management of Information Resources

Jacqueline Solis

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA

jsolis@email.unc.edu

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the *Sofia 2008: Globalization and the Management of Information Resources* conference, held in Sofia, Bulgaria in November 2008.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper gives an outline of the issues, content, speakers, participants, social networking and location of this conference.

Findings – The Sofia 2008 conference offered an excellent balance of informative presentations and social opportunities to meet other attendees and to discuss current topics in libraries, information management, and LIS education.

Originality/value – The paper provides a report of the biennial international conference of value to international information and library professionals and LIS educators.

Keywords – Conferences, Libraries, Librarians, Bulgaria

Paper type – Viewpoint

Sofia 2008: Globalization and the Management of Information Resources, held 12-14 November 2008, was the seventh meeting in the biennial conference series that has been hosted in Kansas City, Kansas in 1995; Warsaw, Poland in 1997; and Sofia, Bulgaria in 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008. The conference this year was under the patronage of his Excellency Mr. Georgi Pirinski, Chairman of the National Assembly of Bulgaria, and sponsored by Emporia State University, University of Sofia, Seton Hall University, University of Kansas, Kansas State University, and University of Northern Colorado. Participants came from over 20 countries on four continents to share ideas and discuss the most recent developments in libraries and LIS education.

The conference opened with greetings from conference organizers Dr. Alexander Dimchev from the University of Sofia and Dr. Herbert Achleitner from Emporia State University, and other organizers and sponsors. Conference patron his Excellency Mr. Georgi Pirinski spoke briefly about the importance of libraries and information professionals in Bulgaria.

The conference was organized into eleven concurrent sessions which took place in adjacent rooms of the Rodina Hotel. Many of the sessions dealt with digital and virtual libraries and related digitization topics, with presentations on subjects ranging from the creation of digital libraries and collections at city and national libraries throughout Europe to digitization of Slavic

and Ottoman manuscripts. There were also a number of sessions on information literacy and education in a variety of countries and contexts, digital repositories and publishing, the information industry and knowledge management, organization and classification, information policy, information ethics, and electronic networks.

Web 2.0 was a popular topic and towards the end of the conference speakers were starting to joke that they would be starting their presentation with yet another definition of Web 2.0. The proliferation of this term, as well as the term "Library 2.0" created a lot of opportunities to compare the ways that new technology and new ways of interacting are affecting librarians and educators in different parts of the world.

In addition, a special concurrent session for student poster presentations was held at the "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" National Library. Students from Emporia State University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and University of Sofia gave short presentations related to their posters, which were later displayed in the exhibit room at the conference hotel.

Exhibitors, always an important source of financial support for the conference, this year included American Bulgarian Library Exchange, Backstage Library Works, ekz.bibliotheksservice, Elsevier, Libraries Unlimited, Internet Tours, Ovid Technologies, Project Muse, and Taylor & Francis. In addition to providing information to attendees, many exhibitors also offered free books or trial database subscriptions to those who visited their tables.

The conference keynote speech by Monsignor Cesare Pasini, Prefect of the Vatican Archive and Library, took place at the University of Sofia. Monsignor Pasini's speech, "The Vatican Library: Between Past and Future", detailed the growth and changes in the library from its official creation by Nicholas V in the mid 15th century through the present. Although the library is currently closed for repairs, it will open again in a few years as a resource for researchers and scholars. After the speech attendees sampled Bulgarian food, wine, and the Bulgarian brandy called rakia at a banquet held in the restaurant "The Egg" at the University.

And speaking of food and wine, the Sofia conference is organized to provide plenty of networking opportunities over breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. Because the majority of the conference takes place at one hotel where most of the attendees also stay, many meals are shared in the hotel dining room. There are also many opportunities for socializing and discussions in the hotel lobby bar. In fact, I think the hotel lobby bar scene is one of the unique features of the Sofia conference. Between sessions and in the evenings, there is never a shortage of interesting people to talk to and have a drink with. A lot of future international collaborations are initiated and planned over a glass of rakia, wine, or Bulgarian beer around the tables in the lobby.

There was a full day pre-conference session on theoretical, policy, legal, and practical issues of open access held at the University of Sofia prior to the official beginning of the conference. Speakers included Rob Davies of MDR Partners, Jessica Branco Colati of the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, Greg Colati from University of Denver, Kevin Stranack from the Public Knowledge Project at Simon Fraser University, and Brian Rosenblum of University of Kansas.

Planning is already underway for Sofia 2010. I would encourage anyone who interested in library and information science developments in other parts of the world or who is looking for international networking opportunities to consider attending.